

## **Canada urged to up its game on climate; Ottawa set to unveil new emissions target at global warming summit**

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### **Body**

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OTTAWA—Half a degree: It's the difference between serious climate damage and global devastation. And Canada is among the countries under pressure this week to show it takes that threat seriously.

Starting Thursday, U.S. President Joe Biden will host a two-day climate summit with 40 world leaders, including Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. The goal is to marshal a united effort to hold back global warming to 1.5 C instead of 2 C by the end of the century.

That would save millions of people from the impact of rising oceans, prevent more plants and animals from going extinct, and result in lower risks of extreme wildfires, floods and droughts, according to a landmark 2018 report from the United Nations' top scientific panel on climate change.

To get there, the panel concluded the world must slash greenhouse gas emissions to 45 per cent below 2010 levels by 2030, and effectively eliminate them - achieving what is called "net-zero" emissions - by 2050.

Already, countries attending this week's summit have declared they will push for deeper reductions. On Tuesday, the United Kingdom said it will slash emissions to 78 per cent below 1990 levels by 2035. A day later, the European Union agreed to reduce emissions to 55 per cent below 1990 levels by 2030. And the United States - where the new Biden administration is keen to position itself as a climate leader after Donald Trump abandoned the cause - will pledge to cut emissions in half by 2030, according to American media reports.

"If in fact the U.S. announces a 50 per cent (target) ... that really dramatically increases the pressure on Canada to up our game," said Kathryn Harrison, a political science professor who specializes in climate and energy policy at the University of British Columbia.

"They expect their trading partners to match their ambition, and the U.S. is our biggest trading partner by far," she said.

Indeed, while the Liberal government promises to unveil a stronger target of its own this week, a cohort of environmental groups is calling on Canada to double its 2030 emissions goal from 30 per cent to 60 per cent below 2005 levels.

The Star's Heather Scofield reported last week that Ottawa is gearing up to declare it will cut emissions by more than 40 per cent below 2005 levels by 2050.

Catherine Abreu, executive director of Climate Action Network Canada, said Ottawa should push to reduce emissions beyond the 45 per cent global reduction the UN panel called for as a global average for 2030.

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"Canada is a top 10 net emitter of greenhouse gas emissions, top five per-capita emitter, and one of the wealthiest 11 nations in the world. So we clearly have a responsibility to act and the ability to do so," she said.

In an interview Wednesday, Environment Minister Jonathan Wilkinson said Canada's new target will be "very ambitious." But he also tempered expectations, stating Canada can't set a goal that "we have no idea how we're going to achieve."

He said countries like the U.S., which still uses more coal for electricity than Canada does, will have an easier time reducing emissions because market changes are already pushing out that emissions-heavy power source. Similar low-cost reductions aren't available in Canada, he said.

"We need to reflect on and figure out what that means in terms of how far we can go. I can tell you that our intention is to be very ambitious and to push as far as we absolutely can," said Wilkinson.

With the addition of new measures in this week's budget, the federal government claims Canada is already on pace to cut emissions to 36 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030. That projection includes \$15 billion on public transit, \$8 billion to help heavy industry reduce greenhouse gas pollution, and plans to impose regulations for cleaner fuel and to increase the minimum carbon price from the current \$40 per tonne of emissions to \$170 per tonne in 2030.

It also relies on future co-operation with the U.S. on policies like fuel-efficiency standards and methane regulations for oil and gas producers.

Environmentalists and climate action proponents argue it's clear where Canada needs to cut emissions. The latest national tally of greenhouse gas pollution, for example, shows emissions from oil and gas extraction and road transportation jumped by 67 per cent and 18 per cent respectively between 2005 and 2019.

This shows the need to "phase out" the fossil fuel industry in Canada to slash annual emissions that have barely budged since 2005, said Keith Stewart, a climate and energy campaigner for Greenpeace Canada.

"The way you stop climate change is you stop burning fossil fuels, and anything else is fooling yourself," he said.

Harrison said this week's climate summit could hasten such a shift as more countries - including the U.S., Canada's top customer for oil - push harder to get off fossil fuels.

"We've already seen international investors moving out of Canada's oilsands," she said, referring to how financial giants like BlackRock and Norway's sovereign wealth fund are backing away from this country's fossil fuel sector.

Wilkinson said he agrees Canada needs to start seeing emissions reductions from "all sectors of the economy," and that clean fuel regulations and the national carbon price will make that happen for Canada's fossil fuel industries.

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